

REMARKS

Claims 12-18 are pending in this application.

By this Amendment, independent claims 12 and 16 are amended to incorporate the subject matter of claims 23 and 24, respectively.

Claims 23 and 24 are canceled. No new matter is added. Reconsideration of the application is respectfully requested.

Entry of the amendments is proper under 37 CFR §1.116 because the amendments:

(a) place the application in condition for allowance (for the reasons discussed herein); (b) do not raise any new issue requiring further search and/or consideration (as the amendments amplify issues previously discussed throughout prosecution); and (c) place the application in better form for appeal, should an appeal be necessary. Entry of the amendments is thus respectfully requested.

The Examiner is respectfully requested, again, to acknowledge receipt of the priority document in this national stage of PCT application.

The Examiner is respectfully requested to acknowledge consideration of the references submitted in the Information Disclosure Statement concurrently filed herewith.

The Office Action rejects claims 12-18, 23 and 24 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over U.S. Patent No. 7,091,481 to Miller (Miller I) in view of U.S. Patent No. 7,274,015 to Miller (Miller II). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

**I. The Office Action Fails to Establish a
Prima Facie Rejection of Claims 23 and 24**

Claim 23 recited that "at least one of the two plate-shaped unit electrodes has grooves and/or recesses on both surfaces of the plate-shaped ceramic dielectric." Claim 24 recited a similar feature. These two claims were added in the previous Amendment.

The Office Action only lists claims 23 and 24 in the §103(a) rejection, but does not establish the basis for rejecting claims 23 and 24. In particular, the §103(a) rejection only focuses on the new features added to independent claims 12 and 16 in the previous Amendment. The Office Action fails to address where the specific feature recited in claims 23 and 24 is discussed in Miller I and/or Miller II. Thus, the Office Action fails to establish a *prima facie* case of rejection concerning claims 23 and 24.

II. The Finality of the Office Action Should be Withdrawn

The Office Action fails to provide a basis for rejecting claims 23 and 24, as discussed above. Thus, Applicants are deprived of the opportunity to challenge the rejection of claims 23 and 24. Accordingly, the finality of the Office Action is improper. Withdrawal of the finality of the Office Action is respectfully requested, so that Applicants may have an opportunity to challenge the rejection of claims 23 and 24.

III. The Cited References Do Not Disclose or Render Obvious the Subject Matter Recited in the Claims As Amended

Independent claims 12 and 16 are amended to incorporate the subject matter of claims 23 and 24, respectively. As amended, claims 12 and 16 recite that "at least one of the two plate-shaped unit electrodes has grooves and/or recesses on both surfaces of the plate-shaped ceramic dielectric."

The Office Action fails to establish any basis that the cited references disclose the subject matter recited in claims 23 and 24, currently incorporated in claims 12 and 16. In fact, Miller I and Miller II do not disclose that "at least one of the two plate-shaped unit electrodes has grooves and/or recesses on both surfaces of the plate-shaped ceramic dielectric." Thus, the combination of Miller I and Miller II does not disclose all features recited in independent claims 12 and 16.

Also, Miller I and Miller II do not render obvious the subject matter recited in the claims. For example, when the distance between the surfaces of unit electrodes is large, it is necessary to supply a large amount of the electric power for generating uniform and stable plasma. The constitution of stacking a plurality of electrodes enables to make the distance between the surfaces of electrode short, which can save the electric power for generating stable plasma. This is because the magnetic field between the surfaces of electrodes becomes uniform with decreased distance therebetween. Therefore, the plasma device for purification of exhaust gas often has such a constitution.

Claims 12 and 16, as amended, require that "at least one of the two plate-shaped unit electrodes has grooves and/or recesses on both surfaces of the plate-shaped ceramic dielectric." When such a unit electrode is stacked with other electrodes, the grooves and/or recesses enlarge the space between the unit electrodes, while the distances between the unit electrodes are kept short. Thus, uniform and stable plasma can be generated with low energy, even though the spaces between the unit electrodes are enlarged. Miller I and Miller II do not recognize these advantages. Thus, one of ordinary skill would not have had any reason, based on the disclosure of Miller I and Miller II, to modify Miller I and/or Miller II to reach the configuration recited in the claims.

For at least the above reasons, Miller I and Miller II, either individually or in combination, do not disclose or render obvious the subject matter recited in claims 23 and 24, currently incorporated in independent claims 12 and 16. Also, claims 13-15, 17 and 18 are each patentable at least in view of the patentability of claims 12 and 16, from which they respectively depend, as well as for additional features they recite. Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection of claims 12-18 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) is respectfully requested.

IV. Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 12-18 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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Attachment:
Information Disclosure Statement

Date: June 30, 2009

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